

4.0 ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

This section briefly describes the regional setting of the city of Chula Vista. A more detailed description of existing conditions is provided at the beginning of each impact issue area addressed in Section 5.0, Environmental Impact Analysis.

4.1 Location

The city of Chula Vista is located in southern San Diego County, between National City and the southernmost portion of the city of San Diego which abuts the U.S.-Mexican border. Chula Vista encompasses approximately 52 square miles of land from the San Diego Bay to the Otay Lakes, generally between Sweetwater River and Otay River.

In addition to the city of Chula Vista, the General Plan boundary includes lands within the county of San Diego unincorporated area identified within the Sweetwater Community Planning Area and Jamul/Dulzura and Otay Subregional Planning Areas as well as portions of the cities of National City and San Diego.

4.2 Climate

The climate of the region encompassing the Chula Vista General Plan area is characterized by warm, dry summers and mild, wet winters. Clear skies predominate for much of the year due to a semi-permanent high-pressure cell located over the Pacific Ocean. This high-pressure cell also drives the dominant onshore circulation and helps to create subsidence and radiation temperature inversions. Subsidence inversions occur during the warmer months when descending air associated with the high-pressure cell comes in contact with cool marine air. Radiation inversions typically occur on winter nights when air near the ground cools by radiation and the air aloft remains warm.

4.3 Setting

The city of Chula Vista consists of older residential areas, vibrant urban neighborhoods, and newer, master-planned communities. Chula Vista's west side (west of I-805) is largely developed, while the east side (east of I-805) is experiencing a sustained period of strong growth. Some adjacent areas in neighboring jurisdictions (San Diego, National City, and Coronado) are largely built out; however, some areas (such as Otay Mesa in San Diego to the south) are growing. County land to the east of Chula Vista is generally vacant and undeveloped. Several industrial and office employment centers are located throughout the city in both western and eastern Chula Vista. Recreational opportunities within the city include four golf courses, two harbor marinas, miles of pedestrian, biking, and equestrian trails, and numerous parks and other recreation facilities.

Chula Vista's overall site topography varies from generally level mesas, river valleys, and coastal plains to steeply sloping canyons, arroyos, drainages, and mountains. Elevations across the area range from sea level to roughly 2,000 feet above mean sea level (MSL). The land uses vary from previously developed land zoned for residential, commercial, industrial, and recreational uses to open former agricultural land and undisturbed native habitat.

4.4 Demographics

Chula Vista's population is approximately 209,200, accounting for approximately seven percent of the San Diego region's population. Based on the City's current, adopted General Plan, the San Diego Association of Governments forecasts that population in Chula Vista will continue to grow, approaching 280,000 by 2030. Of cities with populations greater than 100,000, Chula Vista has the eighth fastest percentage growth rate nationally since the 2000 Census and the seventh fastest rate for the most recent one-year period measured (U.S. Census Bureau 2003).

The estimated average age in Chula Vista is 33.3 years. A major shift in the age structure of the region's population is expected over the next 20 years. The forecasted average age is projected to be over 40 by the year 2030. This will alter workforce dynamics, as the percentage of the population of 18- to 54-year-olds declines and the population of those 55 and over increases.

The 2000 Census shows that Chula Vista now has a lower percentage of below poverty level families than either the region or the state. In 2003, the estimated median household income in Chula Vista was \$49,065 (1999 figure adjusted for inflation), approximately the same as the region but over 16 percent higher than the national median. It is forecast that median income will increase in both Chula Vista and the region over the next 20 years, with the rate of income growth in Chula Vista expected to greatly exceed that of the region (SANDAG 2003).